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# Bike Ride with Older Boys

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*Laura Kasischke*

BIKE RIDE WITH OLDER BOYS

The one I didn't go on.

I was thirteen,  
and they were older.  
I'd met them at the public pool. I must

have given them my number. I'm sure

I'd given them my number,  
knowing the girl I was . . .

It was summer. My afternoons  
were made of time and vinyl.  
My mother worked,  
but I had a bike. They wanted

to go for a ride.  
Just me and them. I said  
okay fine, I'd  
meet them at the Stop-n-Go  
at four o'clock.  
And then I didn't show.

I have been given a little gift—  
something sweet  
and inexpensive, something  
I never worked or asked or said  
thank you for, most  
days not aware  
of what I have been given, or what I missed—

because it's that, too, isn't it?  
I never saw those boys again.  
I'm not as dumb  
as they think I am

but neither am I wise. Perhaps

it is the best  
afternoon of my life. Two  
cute and older boys  
pedaling beside me—respectful, awed. When we

turn down my street, the other girls see me . . .

Everything as I imagined it would be.

Or, I am in a vacant field. When I  
stand up again, there are bits of glass and gravel  
ground into my knees.  
I will never love myself again.  
Who knew then  
that someday I would be

thirty-seven, wiping  
crumbs off the kitchen table with a sponge, remembering  
them, thinking  
of this—

those boys still waiting  
outside the Stop-n-Go, smoking  
cigarettes, growing older.